

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10 L-03
NSAE-00 PA-02 SP-02 SS-15 ACDA-12 TRSE-00 SSO-00
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0616
THE WHITE HOUSE IMMEDIATE
SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
INFO USICA WASHDC
AMEMBASSY LONDON

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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: NATO MARR ETEL
SUBJECT: SUNDAY TIMES EDIT: "CARTER DOES WORLD A SERVICE"

1. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF EDITORIAL IN TODAY'S SUNDAY TIMES OF LONDON HEADED "CARTER DOES THE WORLD A SERVICE". ACCOMPANYING ARTICLE, DONE BY TEAM OF SUNDAY TIMES REPORTERS, IS ALSO EXCERPTED BELOW. BEGIN EDITORIAL TEXT:

1.
CARTER DOES THE WORLD A SERVICE. PRESIDENT CARTER FACED A BATTERY OF CHARGES LAST WEEK OVER HIS HANDLING OF THE NEUTRON BOMB, NOW MERCIFULLY RETURNED TO COLD STORAGE. HIS MOSCOW OPPOSITE NUMBER, PRESIDENT BREZHNEV, ACCUSED HIM OF "INDECISION AND INCONSISTENCY." THE EUROPEAN PRESS BLASTED HIM FOR PULLING THE RUG FROM UNDER HIS ALLIES' FEET. EVEN HIS HOME SUPPORTERS FELT HE HAD BEEN RASH. YET IN ALMOST EVERY PARTICULAR THE INDICTMENT IS MIS-CONCEIVED.

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. ON THE SHILLY-SHALLYING AND RUG-PULLING COUNTS, ALMOST EVERYONE INVOLVED IS MORE GUILTY THAN CARTER. APART FROM ONE OFF-THE-CUFF REMARK WHEN HE WAS JUST STARTING TO THINK ABOUT ITS IMPLICATIONS, HIS LINE HAS REMAINED UNCHANGED THROUGHOUT--THAT IT IS AN APPALLING DEVICE, CUTTING RIGHT ACROSS HIS CONCERN FOR EFFECTIVE DISARMAMENT AND BETTER

RELATIONS WITH THE THIRD WORLD, AND THAT ITS PRODUCTION AND DEPLOYMENT COULD BE JUSTIFIED ONLY IN THE CASE OF DIRE NEED ON THE PART OF AMERICA'S CLOSEST FRIENDS. FOR MONTHS US DIPLOMATS, BOMBARDED WITH PLEAS TO HELP NATO MEET THE THREAT OF THE MASSED WARSAW PACT TANKS IN EASTERN EUROPE, HAVE BEEN PLEADING IN THEIR TURN FOR SOME CLEAR PUBLIC EXPRESSION OF THAT NEED--THE MINIMUM REQUIREMENT IF CARTER WAS TO WIN CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL FOR THE GO-AHEAD. YET WEST EUROPE'S GOVERNMENTS BALKED AT TAKING ANY SUCH POLITICALLY HAZARDOUS STANCE. ONLY IN THE PAST FEW DAYS, WITH CARTER CLEARLY ON THE POINT OF DROPPING THE WHOLE THING, HAVE WEST GERMANY'S HELMUT SCHMIDT AND OUR OWN JAMES CALLAGHAN COME EVEN HALF INTO THE OPEN. THEY CAN COUNT THEMSELVES LUCKY TO HAVE SALVAGED EVEN A PARTIAL NEUTRON OPTION.

. BUT SHOULD NOT CARTER HAVE GONE AHEAD WITH MANUFACTURE, TO PROVIDE HIMSELF WITH A REAL BARGAINING COUNTER AGAINST THE USSR? ONLY IF HE WERE A MUCH MORE CYNICAL MANIPULATOR THAN HE HAS EVER APPEARED. THE TRUTH IS THAT THE NEUTRON BOMB'S CURRENT CAPABILITIES HAVE BEEN MUCH EXAGGERATED. IT IS FAR FROM THE CLEAN, CLINICAL DEVICE ITS DEFENDERS PRETEND, AND IT CANNOT EVEN BE FIRED ACCURATELY AT ITS TARGET. BY TEMPORARILY REMOVING IT FROM THE BOARD, THE PRESIDENT HAS IN EVERY WAY DONE THE WORLD A SERVICE.
END TEXT.

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2. ACCOMPANYING ARTICLE HEADED "THE NEUTRON MESS" BY TEAM OF FIVE SUNDAY TIMES REPORTERS BEGINS WITH FOLLOWING LEAD IN. BEGIN TEXT:

THE CONFUSION OVER PRESIDENT CARTER'S DECISION TO DEFER-- AND IN PRACTICE ALMOST CERTAINLY TO CANCEL -- THE NEUTRON BOMB HAS LEFT NATO IN DISARRAY. WHAT, NOW, IS THE STATUS OF THE NUCLEAR WEAPONS THAT NATO HAS ALWAYS RELIED ON TO DETER ADVANCING ARMIES OF SOVIET TANKS LIKE THE FORMATION SHOWN ON EXERCISE ON THE RIGHT? BUT IS CARTER TO BLAME FOR THIS CONFUSION? OR WAS IT NATO'S OWN DOING? TONY GERAGHTY, WITH ANTONY TERRY, KEITH RICHARDSON, MARIO MONDIANO AND PETER PRINGLE PIECE TOGETHER THE DISTURBING EVIDENCE THAT IT WAS EUROPE WHICH CHANGED ITS MIND, NOT WASHINGTON. END TEXT.

3. FURTHER EXCERPTS: BUT AT THE BRUSSELS MEETING (AT NATO) IN DECEMBER OF DEFENCE MINISTERS WHICH FOLLOWED BARI, THE AMERICANS FOUND THEIR EUROPEAN ALLIES EVEN LESS ENTHUSIASTIC (ABOUT THE ER/RB).

. BROWN SAID HE HAD TAKEN DUE NOTE OF THE SUSCEPTIBILI-

TIES MANIFESTED IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES ABOUT THE WEAPON. BUT HE EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT THE ALLIES WOULD BE IN A POSITION TO LET HIM KNOW SOON THEIR OWN POINTS OF VIEW ABOUT THE DESIRABILITY OF DEPLOYING SUCH A WEAPON.

. BY THEN, BROWN DID NOT REALLY BELIEVE THAT. NEITHER DID THE EUROPEANS. EVEN THE WEST GERMANS RETREATED AT BRUSSELS FROM THE STAND THEY HAD TAKEN AT BARI. THE WEST GERMAN DEFENCE MINISTER, GEORG LEBER, NOW PROPOSED THAT THE FORMULATION OF A COMMON POSITION ON THE WEAPON--THE DECISION CARTER WANTED--BE POSTPONED UNTIL THE QUESTION

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OF THE IMPACT THE ISSUE WAS HAVING ON EUROPEAN PUBLIC OPINION AND POLITICAL PARTIES COULD BE EXAMINED.

. IT WAS, EFFECTIVELY, THE END. EVERYONE KNEW IT. DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS HAVE WOUND ON SINCE THEN. BUT IN REALITY THE ONLY QUESTION HAS BEEN WHEN CARTER WOULD DROP THE WEAPON. IN THE EVENT, HE DECIDED, ALONE IN GEORGIA ON SUNDAY, MARCH 19. THE PROBLEM NOW WAS HOW TO BREAK THE NEWS TO NATO. ON MARCH 20, THE DAY AFTER CARTER'S DECISION, THE NATO AMBASSADORS WERE DUE TO MEET TO DISCUSS THE LATEST POSITION AND, SOME HOPED, TO RECEIVE WORD THAT CARTER WAS IN FAVOUR. ABRUPTLY, THE MEETING WAS CANCELLED.

. NOT UNTIL TEN DAYS LATER, WHEN THE PRESIDENT WAS ON HIS WAY TO BRAZIL, DID HIS DEPUTY SECRETARY OF STATE,

WARREN CHRISTOPHER, ARRIVE IN BONN TO SEE THE WEST GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTER HANS-DIETRICH GENSCHER--AND TO BREAK THE NEWS.

. CARTER'S MESSAGE WAS THAT HE HAD BEEN FORCED TO RE-
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CONSIDER THE NEUTRON BOMB BECAUSE OF "LACK OF A UNITED POLICY IN NATO" -- HE MENTIONED PARTICULARLY THE DUTCH, NORWEGIANS AND BELGIANS.

. NEXT DAY, CHRISTOPHER DELIVERED THE SAME MESSAGE TO CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT IN HAMBURG AND THE DAY AFTER THAT, APRIL 1, TO FOREIGN SECRETARY DAVID OWN IN LONDON.

. THE ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE BRITISH AND GERMAN POSITIONS ON THE WEAPON IS THAT WEST GERMAN BONN WAS APPALLED BY THE NEWS. WHITEHALL WAS NOT. BONN REGARDS THE NEUTRON BOMB AS VITAL FOR NATO AND ITS CANCELLATION, EVEN DEFERMENT, AS AN UNMITIGATED DISASTER. WHITEHALL DOES NOT. ON THE POLITICAL FRONT, CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT THINKS CARTER'S INSISTENCE UPON SOME PUBLIC EUROPEAN COMMITMENT TO THE WEAPON SHOWS A NAIVE IGNORANCE OF THE FACTS OF EUROPEAN POLITICAL LIFE. CALLAGHAN THINKS IT WAS UNDERSTANDABLE. SO IT WAS IN A STATE CLOSE TO PANIC THAT ON APRIL 4--TWO DAYS AHEAD OF SCHEDULE--GENSCHER FLEW INTO WASHINGTON.

. BEFORE LEAVING, GENSCHER TOLD LEADERS OF GERMAN POLITICAL PARTIES IN STRICT CONFIDENCE THAT HE WOULD PRESS CARTER TO PRODUCE THE BOMB "IN UNILATERAL ACTION" WITHOUT AWAITING EUROPEAN AGREEMENT. ACTUALLY IN FRONT OF CARTER, GENSCHER WENT FURTHER. STATIONING THE WEAPON IN EUROPE, HE SAID, SHOULD AS A FIRST STEP BE MADE A MAJOR ISSUE IN DISARMAMENT NEGOTIATIONS, BETWEEN THE US AND RUSSIA. THEN, GENSCHER PROMISED, IF NO CONCESSION WERE MADE IN RETURN BY THE RUSSIANS, THE EUROPEANS WOULD ACCEPT THE WEAPON AS PART OF THEIR ARMOURIES.

. TO GENSCHER, THIS LOOKED LIKE THE ENDORSEMENT WASH-
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INGTON HAD BEEN SEEKING FOR MONTHS. CARTER'S ANSWER WAS TO REPROACH GENSCHER FOR BONN'S SCANT PUBLIC ENTHUSIASM FOR THE WEAPON.

. BRITAIN HAS THROUGHOUT SOUGHT TO PLAY ITS CUSTOMARY
ROLE OF "HONEST BROKER"--IN THIS CASE, WITH THREE OBJEC-
TIVES. FIRST, THAT THE WEAPON SHOULD NOT BE DEPLOYED UNTIL
SOME ATTEMPT HAD BEEN MADE TO OBTAIN SOVIET CONCESSIONS
IN EXCHANGE. BUT, SECOND, THE UK WOULD PERSUADE THE WEST
GERMANS TO ACCEPT THE WEAPON IF CARTER DID DECIDE TO PRO-
DUCE IT. THIRD, STEPS WOULD BE TAKEN TO ENSURE A SUPPLY
OF THE WARHEADS FOR USE BY THE BRITISH ARMY OF THE RHINE,
IF THE PRESIDENT DID GO AHEAD. END FURTHER EXCERPTS.

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